

# TRANSFORMING CONFLICT AND AVP/HIPP IN SYDNEY NSW

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## 1 Introduction

In Australia the Alternatives to Violence (AVP) and Help Increase the Peace Program (HIPP) groups are combined. AVP-Australia has made the decision that the AVP and HIPP manuals are to be available only to trained AVP/HIPP facilitators to be used for AVP/HIPP workshops. This is in part to reduced the temptation for non AVP/HIPP trained teachers calling their classes AVP or HIPP workshops and compromising the reputation of AVP and HIPP.

The *Transforming Conflict Facilitating Nonviolence: a Facilitators Guide* was written for those who would like to present nonviolence experiential learning style classes outside the AVP/HIPP workshop setting. The manual was designed for both AVP/HIPP facilitators and non-AVP/HIPP trained people. These classes can be called Transforming Conflict or any other name but NOT AVP or HIPP. Workshops using these names must be run under the auspice of local or regional AVP groups affiliated with AVP International. The AVP mandala and HIPP keys are reserved for AVP/HIPP workshops and are not used outside AVP/HIPP. So far over 30,000 students in the Australian state of New South Wales have completed twenty-hour Transforming Conflict classes in the last four years.

The manual is divided into sections –

1. The introduction for the Australian Technical and Further Education (TAFE) system
2. The syllabus details for teachers of the two modules
3. How to facilitate using this nonviolence experiential learning style
4. Collection of activities organised by the nonviolence learning blocks.

## 2 Background

Two facilitators who did facilitator training in 1993 in the second T4F in Sydney began to use the AVP style of nonviolence experiential learning in their workplaces in 1994.

Graeme Stuart started an AVP group in Newcastle (near Sydney). Graeme, a youth worker, and fellow AVP trained facilitators developed the first HIPP workshop program in Australia. The program ran for three years and received a grant for a year-long program of workshops in both schools and in the community. Students came from a wide range of groups including youth-at-risk, mainstream students and students from the district student representative council.

Katherine Smith, a Communication teacher with TAFE (Technical and Further Education), began to use the AVP style of nonviolence experiential learning in her classroom. A number of teaching colleagues and supervisors did AVP training and as a result changed the way that they

taught Communication. Many TAFE classes benefited from this nonviolence experiential learning style, in particular, classes of disabilities students and youth-at-risk doing basic education courses.

In 1997 several special education school teachers dealing with youth with behaviour problems trained in AVP, built on the experience of HIPP workshops from Newcastle and adopted HIPP workshops as their main intervention strategies for their youth-at-risk.

### **3 Transforming Conflict**

In 2000 Katherine was asked by Sue Ellyard, the NSW Communication Curriculum Manager, to write several Communication modules. Sue was very impressed with the innovative experiential learning style that was being used by AVP trained teachers and aimed to use these new modules to shift the way Communication and other subjects are taught in TAFE classes by encouraging a more experiential approach.

Katherine wrote the syllabuses for a set of two modules using AVP/HIPP nonviolence learning styles that had been so successfully used in TAFE and school classrooms for a number of years. These modules are *Transforming Conflict* and *Facilitating Nonviolence*. These modules are now nationally accredited Communication modules that are included in a variety of technical education courses and can also be taught as stand-alone courses across Australia.

It was interesting to see that the classes have been most widely accepted by teachers of youth-at-risk and students with disabilities. The module has also been included as part of the prison officers training course. All inmates and school students who have completed either an AVP or a HIPP workshop can get an exemption for the Transforming Conflict modules of the TAFE basic adult education course (General Certificate of Vocational Education).

Initially the modules were written with the *Friendly Classroom for a Small Planet* as the textbook as this book was the nearest she could find to covering the kind of nonviolence experiential learning style that is practical in a TAFE classroom situation. After starting to run teacher training programs she realised that the teachers needed more assistance to be able to move from teaching to facilitating learning styles and so was asked to write a manual called *Transforming Conflict Facilitating Nonviolence: a Facilitator's Guide*. This has been published by TAFE, which gives the manual the official status of being accepted by the Department of Education.

Katherine says that for her there is a difference between AVP and HIPP workshops and Transforming Conflict classes. AVP occurs in AVP-sponsored workshops with teams of specially trained volunteers in the community or prisons. HIPP occurs in AVP/HIPP sponsored workshops in schools with teams of specially trained, paid teachers who have volunteered to run HIPP workshops. The HIPP students are volunteers also, as after the first session all participants are given the opportunity whether to continue or to leave the workshop. On the other hand Transforming Conflict is usually taught by individual paid teachers with varying levels of training, in any setting – TAFE, schools, community groups like scouts, workplaces, prisons etc. A classroom setting does not have the AVP environment of a team of facilitators nor the same level of safety, community and volunteerism. The learning outcomes of Transforming Conflict are recognised as a subset of those achieved in an AVP workshop.

The Transforming Conflict modules in TAFE have raised the community profile of AVP workshops. Many TAFE and school teachers, other trainers and TAFE students have been attracted to participate in AVP workshops.

In Sydney and NSW it has been a strength for our AVP organisation to have such close links between the prison, community, HIPP - schools and Transforming Conflict groups and the cross fertilisation between the various learning styles. There has been little or no conflict between the unpaid facilitation of AVP prison and community workshops and the paid facilitation of HIPP workshops and Transforming Conflict classes. Many facilitators are involved with more than one setting. There was much valued input from different facilitators with different experience into the Transforming Conflict manual. The Transforming Conflict syllabus drafts were reviewed by the members of the AVP-Australia 2000 National Gathering, a number of AVP/HIPP facilitators trialed the initial Transforming Conflict courses, all AVP-Australian groups received draft copies of the Transforming Conflict Manual for input, and twenty two AVP and HIPP facilitators contributed on the Review Panel and Review Committee.

#### **4 HIPP workshops**

In 1997 a group of special education teachers heard about AVP, did AVP training and built on the experience from the Newcastle HIPP workshops. In NSW each Department of Education school district has a Behaviour Team of special education teachers who assist the students with behaviour problems in the 40 schools in their district. One of the Sydney District Behaviour Teams has been running HIPP workshops for seven years. They also developed the HIPP keys which are similar to the Transforming Power mandala elements.

First they ran HIPP workshops to assist their at-risk students reintegrate into the mainstream classes with ten two-hour per week sessions. Then they ran three-day HIPP workshops for mainstream and at-risk students. Now they run only three-day workshops for both targeted groups and for whole school years. In several schools now all the students in one year have participated in HIPP workshops for four years. For example in one Sydney girls' high school all the 150 Year 8 students (13 year olds) have participated in HIPP workshops for 4 consecutive years. They have averaged each year - 150 students participating in the Basic HIPP workshop, 45 participating in the Advanced HIPP workshop and 15 trained in the HIPP T4F workshop. These student facilitators co-facilitate the workshops for the next group of HIPP workshops.

Initially all the HIPP facilitators were trained in the AVP-Sydney community workshops and the AVP(NSW) Prison group workshops. So many teachers have wanted AVP/HIPP training that now four sets of special weekday HIPP workshops for adults (teachers and parents) are held in Sydney each year. The Sydney HIPP Group has also trained HIPP facilitators in Western Australia, Tasmania, Canberra, Queensland and Papua New Guinea.

#### **5 Successes**

- There has been little research as to the impact of AVP or HIPP or Transforming Conflict workshops in Australia
- We cannot get official figures, however one estimate is around 30,000 students have completed the Transforming Conflict module in NSW

- There has been more than 50% improvement in retention rates for TAFE youth-at-risk studying adult basic education classes where Transforming Conflict classes have been presented at the beginning of the semester. The building of community and communication skills for these students at the beginning of their courses has been an important factor in improving their retention rates
- The students in one six-month TAFE outreach course have been informally studied for six years. Students who have dropped out of school early have done a bridging course comprising Transforming Conflict, mentoring and a vocational component. Preliminary findings indicate that there is a marked increase of students returning to education (school or TAFE) and/or joining the workforce and a marked decrease in the number of these youth-at-risk ending up in the correctional system
- The many word-of-mouth stories of life-changing personal changes after AVP, HIPP and Transforming Conflict workshops inspire and motivate continued commitment to nonviolence experiential learning.

## **6 Further contact**

For further information about Transforming Conflict and AVP/HIPP Sydney NSW activities contact [avpsydney@avp.org.au](mailto:avpsydney@avp.org.au)

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